

NAME MENTRYVILLE

COUNTY LOS ANGELES COUNTY

APPROVAL COMMITTEE:

RAYMOND CIRVICIAN, ACTING CHAIRMAN

NADINE I. HATA

KATHRYN H. KAISER

JOHN H. KEMBLE

JOY SUNDBERG

STATE PARK COMMISSION


DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

REGISTERED LANDMARK NUMBER 516 - 2

DATE December 7, 1976

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF HISTORICAL LANDMARK

Name of Proposed Landmark MENTRYVILLE

Location Near Newhall; west on Interstate 5 on Pico Canyon Road;
Standard Oil Company of California property.

County LOS ANGELES

Name and Address of Landowner upon Whose Property Landmark is Proposed _____
Std Oil Co of Ca, 225 Bush St, San Francisco, Ca 94104

Name and Address of Applicant BETTY HOUGHTON PEMBER Phone No. (805) 259-4974
Newhall Woman's Club & Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society, 25223 Atwood Blvd, Newhall, Ca 91321 Bus. Phone No. same

Is this landmark of statewide significance as described in the State of Policy? YES

Explain (use extra sheet if necessary): Mentryville was ^{one of} the first real Oil Boom towns in our State. It has the two-fold honor of being located ^{near} on the site of California's first commercially successful oil field, plus being named after the man who literally sunk it's first successful producing oil well.

Charles Alexander Mentry was in charge of one of the largest industries in Southern California. (This first well, "Pico #1", still produces oil at the Ghost Town of Mentryville, 100 years after its founding.)

Mentryville was not the run-of-the mill Boom Town; it was quite advanced, with running water, gas lights & paved roads. The oil workers found security, here, under the wise & affectionate guidance of Alex Mentry. This was a town into which they could bring & raise their children. The Felton School provided for their children's education. The social hall offered hours of recreation for the town's several hundred residents. A barn/carriage house was build. There was a machine shop with lathes & drill presses; a blacksmith shop to repair tools; a boiler house to furnish power for machinery. A thriving bakery not only supplied all of Mentryville with its baked goods, but Newhall, also. A stage service to Newhall left twice daily with baker goods & mail. There were boarding houses & a rooming house; a tennis & croquet court, plus a swimming area. A traveling minister provided for religious fulfillment. (cont'd - see attach)

Is bibliography complete? (To enable verification of statements and claims made herein.) YES

Is permission of property owner for registration attached? YES (attached)

Is approval of property owner to place a plaque attached? YES

Is proof of reasonable protection for requested landmark attached? YES

Are photographs, prints, or drawings (two views) attached? YES

BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION (Corresponding to one or more items under I, II,

or III of the Statement of Policy.)

The 852 acres known as Mentryville, is located at the mouth of Pico Canyon, 7 miles west of Newhall, just 3 miles west of the Lyons Avenue off ramp, Interstate 5. While it is now a Ghost Town, maintained by Standard Oil Company, it was California's first Oil Boom Town. In 1876, the town boasted, California's first commercial successfully producing oil well - Pico #4.

The accessibility to this Historical Sight, is visible in its entirety to the public, from the gate guarding the entrance. Tours have been, and can be, conducted by contacting the present residents.

The town's residents numbered several hundred, and were the, Star Oil Company's employees and families. The town was governed, for over 20 years, by the the company's oil field supervisor, Charles Alexander Mentry, for whom the town was named. "Alex" Mentry was the man who "brought in" the West's most famous well which, after 100 years, still produces oil.

The town grew rapidly and,unparalleled, for a pioneer town -- though, not without hazards: There were floods in the winter and threats of fire from dry brush, in the summer. Cave-ins occurred during the drilling processes. Yet, Mentryville had all the luxuries of pre-1900 high society. Fine china dishes, silver trays, piped gas & water, paved roads, and even prohibition. Well bred people of oil families, brought with them, imported perfumes, to Pico Canyon. Families attended company bar-b-qs; participated in sports and danced every Saturday night in the Social Hall. Wild game was abundant in the hills. The Railroad was finally completed, making supplies from San Francisco & Los Angeles accessible. Life at Mentryville was spiced with the convenience of an Eastern influence & the prosperity of the oil field. Children played, attended school & splashed in the dammed-up swimming area.

The town's structures consisted of a machine shop, a blacksmith shop, a boiler house, the barn/carriage house, a bakery, boarding houses, rooming houses, the social hall, a tennis & croquet court, the Felton school, the employees homes, and, the outstanding dominating Mentry mansion, with its imported shade trees & lush lawn. Mentry's home was built to accommodate some of the wealthiest men in the nation, such as Leland Stanford, (the railroad czar); Senator Charles N Felton, (for whom the school was named), an energetic millionaire & money man behind early oil speculations. Millionaires were frequent guests of Superintendent Mentry, when they came to view the amazing Pico Oil Fields.

As advanced techniques increased, the number of wells sunk at Mentryville also increased the unmanned production of crude oil. Finally, as the wells were completed, pipelines and roads laid, and the unmanned production capacity reached, residents moved away from Mentryville. In 1920, Standard Oil Co absorbed Star Oil Works Co, & the Pacific Coast Oil Co, and re-retained some of the officers & key employees. Today, only a cluster of three original structures remain: The famous Mentry home; Felton school, (which closed in 1932), & the barn/carriage house. The population numbers five: F J Lagasse, his wife, Carrol & their three daughters. Mr Lagasse is in the employ of Standard Oil Co, & maintains and services, Mentryville.

Last but not least, there stood the unique Victorian Mentry residence, to be visited by many a millionaire; a mansion even by today's standards.

The year 1932, Felton school was closed. Through the years, the elements and fire took their toll of Mentryville. A cluster of only three maintained structures remain today: The Felton school, the barn/carriage house, and the Mentry Residence.

California Star Oil Works', Pico No. 1, was the Company's first well. Pico No's. 2 & 3, were then sunk by the "Springpole", method. In 1879, a steam engine was brought in & used to deepen Pico #1. Because this new deepening method was the Company's 4th drilling operation, Pico #1 was then called Pico #4.

CHARLES ALEXANDER MENTRY - "THE MAN"

Charles Alexander Mentry lived most of his early life in Pennsylvania during the age of the development of Petroleum Oil in that part of the country. The oil industry was to have a great affect on his life. Being a self-made man, with little education, he learned by observation & hard work. He was also a born mechanic & quickly mastered all the details of the oil producing business, becoming an active operator & contractor. By the time he was 26 years old, Charles Mentry was an acknowledged leader as an oil operator, and manager, having 100 wells to his credit.

This young, heavy set, heavily bearded oil man, came out to California in 1873 where oil leases were plentiful & inexpensive. He picked up a lease in Pico Canyon & began his arduous task of drilling. His 3 wells were drilled under extreme difficulty, as the railroad had not been yet completed. No roads ran to the Canyon; water was difficult to obtain & there were practically no adequate tools or machinery to be had. All supplies had to be hauled in over the mountains, & tools had to be improvised from whatever was available. Almost everything used to drill Pico No's. 1, 2 & 3, was at the creation of Mentry's hands and genius.

While Pico No's. 1 & 2 were extremely successful & encouraging, yeilding 6 barrels per day, Mentry found his 3rd well, Pico #3, to be a dry hole. About this time, two years later, an influential group of San Franciscans who had just formed Star Oil Co, showed a keen interest in Charles Mentry & his outstanding results. Mentry assigned hi leases to this Co & went on it's payroll as Superintendent. The Co outfitted Mentry with a steam rig, (a far cry from the Springpole method which he had used earlier), and was ordered to start drilling full speed ahead.. Pico #1 was drilled deeper, (it was renamed Pico #4). Charles A Mentry's claim to fame was to complete the first producing well which the Petroleum Business could be said to have attained its start in this State. In 1876, September 26, at a depth of 370 ft, this well produced 25 barrels of oil per day, (An unheard of amount in that day and age. This is the longest lived well in the history of the west & still yeilds almost one barrel per day.

To get the oil to a Newhall refinery faster, Mentry again showed his genius. He engineered a 2" diameter pipeline through which the oil sped to the refinery, 5 miles away, by gravity alone.

(The Man - cont'd)

Thus, Mentry was left to manage the oil field. Because the Company encouraged its employees to build their homes on the site, California's first oil boom town was born. Also, under the resourceful & kindly supervision of Charles Mentry. His relationship with his employees was almost patriarchal. They looked up to him as their counsellor & friend. And he in turn, treated them with justice, firmness, kindness & sympathy. Young & old were his friends, & many of the best well-drillers in the State were proud to say that under his watchful eye and fostering care, they learned their trade. These employees named the rapidly growing town, "Mentryville", after the man they admired and respected most.

May
Mentry married Flora/Blake, (whose father was Nathan Spencer Lake, elected Judge), in 1878. Two of their four children were born in Mentryville, the other two were born in Los Angeles. For over 20 years he was the Superintendent of the Star Oil Company, and later, the Pacific Coast Oil Co. He also supervised the loading of the first steel tank steamer ever built, & employed on the Pacific Coast. His efforts enabled California to take a front row with other oil producing States.

He led an active and full life at Mentryville. He died in 1900, not realizing the honors he had attained.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: CITE THE BOOKS, RECORDS, AND OTHER AUTHORITIES SUSTAINING THESE
FACTS.

Standard Oil Co of Calif, "Formative Years in the Far West", author, Gerald T White; copywright 1962.

Black Bonanza, by Frank J Taylor and Earl M Welty, copy-right, first edition, 1950.

"The Quarterly"; June 1948.. (The San Fernando Pass and the Pioneer Traffic That Went Over It - pgs 136, 144), part IV, conclusion), by Vernetty Snyder Ripley.

The Ventura County Historical Society, (quartely), "Recollections of a Pioneer Oil Driller". (Vol V, #3, by William Stein, May 1960.

"Pico Ghost Camp"; part 2, by A B Perkins. Printed copy of Eulogy for C A Mentry; by D G Scofield, Sunday Oct 7, 1900.

Los Angeles Times, San Fernando Valley Eastern Edition; Sunday, September 21, 1969: "Swanky Ghost Liner in Old Boom Town".

Signature

Date

This form and all related correspondence is to be sent to the California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee, Post Office Box 2390, Sacramento, California 95811.

An application must be considered solely on its historic or architectural merits and not for commercial gain, political benefits, or other non-historical reasons.

An individual committee member can advise and counsel an applicant, but all applications must be considered by the full committee meeting in regular session.

AUTHORIZATION FROM PROPERTY OWNER OF PROPOSED LANDMARK SITE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PARKS AND RECREATION FOR NUMBER, REGISTRATION, AND ERECTION OF A HISTORICAL LAND-
MARK.



**Standard Oil Company of California,
Western Operations, Inc.**

605 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90015 • Phone (213) 489-1000

General Representation Staff
R. E. Clarke
Vice-President, Southern California
W. J. Murphy
Public Affairs Counsel
J. A. Wild
Government Relations Counsel

May 14, 1976

RECEIVED
SEP 10 1976

ONP

Mr. Herbert Rhodes, Director
California State Department of Parks & Recreation
P. O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Rhodes:

We have been advised that the Newhall Woman's Club and the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society plan to submit an application to the State Landmarks Advisory Board for Registration as a State Landmark the site known as "MENTRYVILLE".

As owner of this historic site near Newhall, west of Interstate 5 on Pico Canyon Road, Standard Oil Company of California:

- 1 - Approves the establishment of this site as a registered State Landmark
- 2 - Approves the placement of an appropriate plaque
- 3 - Assures to the best of our ability that the site will be perpetuated as an historical landmark.

It is hoped that your approval for the establishment of this State Landmark may be received as soon as possible so appropriate ceremonies for the placement of the plaque may be finalized.

Cordially,

cc: Newhall Woman's Club
Santa Clarita Valley
Historical Society